

ACCESS

Oakton

oakton high school ptsa • vienna va • www.oaktonhsptsa.org

October 2011

Letter from the President: Beginning the New Year

Kirsten Rucker, PTSA President • kkunklerrucker@verizon.net

OHS MISSION STATEMENT

Oakton High School will prepare all students for productive and ethical living, life-long learning, and innovative and responsible leadership.

OHS VISION STATEMENT

Through a culture of collaboration, continuous improvement, accountability, and community involvement, Oakton High School will provide rigorous, relevant, and well-rounded education for all students.

SUBMIT

If you have an article that you would like to have included in Access Oakton, please forward it to Marcia Pickett at: mpickett6@verizon.net. The due dates for articles for future publications are: December 1, February 2, April 12, and May 31.

It's hard to believe that we are already through the first month of school! I hope it has been a great start for everyone.

I am Kirsten Rucker and I am your PTSA President this year. I welcome you to come to our meetings and to communicate your questions or concerns. There have been many changes at Oakton over the years. Some have been implemented by changes at national levels, some at state, some at county and some at the school level. Among the many current topics at Oakton are two that are addressed further in this communication. One is the new Honor Code. This is an Oakton High School initiative. There has been a team of teachers, administrators and parents meeting since the beginning of the year to address the issue of helping our children/students to embrace honest work. Cheating and plagiarism have risen dramatically over the years. They are unacceptable, especially in the education environment. It has been decided that Oakton High School will be a place where honor is embraced and incorporated as a part of the culture. Besides changing the honor code content and the consequences of cheating and plagiarism, teachers will be bringing honor concepts into the curriculum. Please help your students to take pride in their own efforts. You will see more on the Honor Code in the coming months. Another issue that has been a concern of some of our parent, teacher and administrator population is the start date of the school year. Please read the excellent article outlining the issue and take the associated survey. As information is disseminated and gathered, updates will be made available and suggested courses of action made. Your input is greatly

appreciated.

Some of you may have seen the article in the Sun Gazette remarking on some of Oakton High School students' choice of dress at the Outback Bowl. While this game was played before school began, the school's dress code should still be followed because it is a school event. Our choices at events that welcome the community are a reflection on the school. The spirit is welcome! However, sometimes our children do not see themselves through the eyes of others and your help and guidance with their selections are appreciated.

Again, please join the PTSA and join us at the monthly meetings. The next meeting will be held on November 2 starting at 6:30 pm with an informal discussion followed by the formal meeting at 7:00. Meetings are held in the library. Forms to join the PTSA and information on supporting its various programs are available on the PTSA website at www.oaktonhsptsa.org.

Thank you for accessing Access Oakton. There is always a lot going on at Oakton High School and this publication shares and welcomes news from all aspects of school life.

Letter From the Principal

John A. Banbury, Principal • john.banbury@fcps.



Dear Parents,
Welcome, parents of the class of 2015! And welcome back to the veterans! I trust that your students are refreshed and ready for a meaningful year at Oakton High School. I am grateful for your engagement with Oakton's PTSA because your collective commitment to continuous improvement ensures progress and increasingly higher levels of excellence for Oakton students.

Oakton High School boasts a record of student achievement unparalleled by most of the county, state, and nation. After several years of honing our curriculum through professional collaboration, virtually all of our students now pass their state exams, and they are attaining the distinction of pass-advanced at higher rates than ever before. In fact, last year Oakton High School was honored with the Governor's Award for Educational Excellence based on our students' progress toward advanced proficiency in the core disciplines. For example, Oakton's pass-advanced rate on the End-of-Course English Writing SOL improved by 12 percent over the last two years. Congratulations are due to our students, parents, and faculty because only one other school in the county achieved this commendation from our governor.

As a result of our school-wide goal to increase enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, 84 percent of last year's graduating seniors completed at least one college-level course during high school, helping to ensure a smooth transition to post-secondary education. Last year alone, a cohort of 224 students completed AP Physics B, and 137 of them scored a three or better on the AP exam—an incredible feat for such a large and diverse group of students. Even with higher enrollment in AP courses, our pass rates on the AP exam remain impressive. For example, 85 percent of the students in AP Language and over 90 percent of the students in AP World History (predominately sophomores) scored a three or better on their exams in May. These results reinforce what we already know: if we set the bar high, students will excel.

The 2011-2012 school year promises continued success and innovation. As expressed in our school's Vision Statement, Oakton High School desires to "prepare all students for productive and ethical living, life-long learning, and innovative and responsible leadership." Living, Learning, and Leading—these goals are broader and more significant than the sort of data that a standardized test can measure. While Oakton High School's faculty understands the efficacy and pragmatism of state and national tests, we are also ready to think bigger. In light of our established success, we are ready to transcend a focus on test scores. Education in the twenty-first century should engage the whole student in preparation for an ever-changing, globalized world. I believe that our students are more than capable of maintaining and improving

their test scores while pursuing twenty-first century learning goals such as active citizenship, critical thinking, ethical research, global awareness, media literacy, and reflective, interdisciplinary learning. This school year, I have asked our faculty to foster a greater sense of meaning and purpose for our students by invigorating our curricula with real-world and interdisciplinary connections—not only appealing to students but also equipping them for today's world.

With these goals in mind, I commissioned an interdisciplinary team of ninth grade teachers to meet over the summer and discuss their courses from a holistic perspective: I asked them to define what it means to be a ninth-grade student at Oakton High School. Over the course of several days of fruitful collaboration, the team determined that many of the strategies and skills and some of the content of their disciplines overlap significantly, and they devised common values, rubrics, and pacing guides to capitalize on these commonalities. Most significantly, the ninth-grade team defined rigorous, interdisciplinary learning goals for every ninth grader—relevant skills upon which students will reflect throughout the school year by maintaining portfolios and presenting their work to the faculty and the community later in the year. Over the next few weeks, freshmen will learn about this portfolio in detail through a Freshman Seminar Series during Cougar Time.

Year by year, other grade levels will repeat this process of interdisciplinary collaboration until we have honed a trajectory from ninth through twelfth grade, defining what it means to be a graduate of Oakton High School who is equipped for both post-secondary education and the world beyond.

While we are implementing the learning portfolio for freshmen only this year, I am excited to introduce another opportunity for all students to engage more fully in their learning process. On March 20 and 21, we will host an Exhibition of Learning at Oakton High School to which all Oakton students and community members are invited. I hope you will plan to attend. Look for more details as the year progresses.

Last year, our core department chairs composed articles for this newsletter to highlight their various programs; this year, the newsletter will introduce you to the various electives that we offer at Oakton. I think you'll find that Oakton offers something to engage every student. I also have more to share with you in our upcoming newsletters and PTSA meetings, but for now I would like to thank you for the love, commitment, generosity, and time that you devote to our school on behalf of your children. I anticipate a special year at Oakton High School as we strive to embrace a learning process that is not only rigorous but also relevant and meaningful.

Sincerely,
Dr. John Banbury

NEW HONOR CODE

New code changes to affect cheating and plagiarism.

Parents, please review with your student(s) our mission and the new set of consequences for cheating and plagiarism that have been developed by a committee of school staff and parents.

Mission

Oakton High School strives to be recognized as a school of honor. Students, teachers, staff and parents uphold high moral values focused upon fostering a love of learning and pride in individual accomplishment. Oakton students will gain an understanding that giving their word has real meaning. To avoid compromising their values of integrity and honesty, students recognize the importance of communication with their teachers.

First Offense

- Teacher informs appropriate administrator using the referral process.
- The teacher informs the parents by phone call.
- The student receives a zero on the graded assignment that gave rise to the Honor Code violation.
- The student, student's parents/guardians, teacher(s), counselor and administrator will meet to discuss the situation.
- If the student is in an honor society, he or she is put on probation for a period of time depending on the honor society's membership rules.

All violations are recorded in the student's SASI file.
Offenses are all per one school year. Offenses will be reset at the beginning of the next school year.

Second Offense

a-d consequences from First Offense above will be carried out

- Coaches and sponsors of any extracurricular activity that the student is involved in are notified.
- The student is recommended for dismissal from membership of honor societies based on the due-process procedure of that honor society.
- The student will not be invited to become a member of an honor society for one calendar year.
- The student may not run for Student Advisory Council, Student Government Association or class office or apply for the Leadership class for one calendar year.
- The student will be issued one day of Saturday School.

Third and All Subsequent Offenses

a-d consequences from First Offense above will be carried out

- Coaches and sponsors of any extracurricular activity in which the student is involved are notified.
- The student can receive up to five days of out-of-school suspension and/or suspension from all extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

Find It All @ Your OHS Library

Check Out the OHS Library Web Site: <http://www.fcps.edu/OaktonHS/library/>
Find links to the FCPS Library Catalog, Blackboard.com, and the Fairfax County Public Library. Select Online Databases to access authoritative, reliable, current sources for your student's assignments. Database user names and passwords are posted in the @Oakton HS Library Blackboard course under Online Databases button.

Please Reconcile Library Fines and Bills

Please remind your students to resolve all library obligations for lost and overdue books in a timely manner.

Student library bills and overdue notices are distributed at the end of each quarter.

Earlier School Start Date Would Benefit Our Students

By: Colleen Eddy on behalf of the OHS PTSA

In May through early June, our students complete their national and state end-of-course assessments, including AP and SOL exams. After these tests, students remain in school for three more weeks to meet state requirements for seat time. In general, teachers finish teaching and reviewing new content prior to exams in May, and for students, these exams signal the end of the school year.

While Oakton teachers strive to enrich the final weeks of school with interesting projects and final exam preparation, most students struggle to remain engaged. Why should we inflict these torturous weeks on students and teachers? More importantly, wouldn't these three weeks of school be better spent on instruction prior to AP and SOL exams? Much of the country and 60 percent of Virginia's school divisions (including Loudoun County) open prior to Labor Day, granting those students a significant advantage over our students in their preparation for standardized tests. While our AP teachers and students race through content to meet a May deadline, most of the country has extra time to prepare.

If 60 percent of Virginia's school divisions open prior to Labor Day, what prevents Fairfax County from doing the same? In 1986 Virginia's General Assembly enacted a code known as the King's Dominion Law to prohibit school divisions from opening earlier than Labor Day with the exception of schools that lose five or more days of instruction on yearly average due to bad weather or

those that offer innovative programs requiring an earlier start date. There is no educationally sound reason for the King's Dominion Law. It is solely a response to the economic concerns of Virginia's tourism and hospitality industries. If high school students return to school prior to Labor Day, who will work at the amusement parks once college students leave in mid August? Will families

still vacation in Virginia for Labor Day if school is in session before the holiday?

From the perspectives of educators and parents, the concerns of the tourism industry deviate from our primary focus: students. If our students would benefit from an earlier start date, shouldn't Fairfax County have the right to open before Labor Day? Oakton's PTSA, FCPS, and the Virginia PTA agree:

“From the perspectives of educators and parents, the concerns of the tourism industry deviate from our primary focus: students. If our students would benefit from an earlier start date, shouldn't Fairfax County have the right to open before Labor Day?”

local school boards should set school start dates in the best interest of students, not business.

Last winter, FCPS administered a survey to parents and employees, and a majority of those who responded favor an earlier start date (64 percent of parents and 71 percent of employees). Oakton's PTSA would like to know the opinion of our immediate school community on the matter. Please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XGJD792> to complete a survey by October 31; we'll send a reminder through a Keep-In-Touch email. We would like to include the results of this survey in our correspondence with state delegates who we hope will reevaluate the issue in the near future.

OHS Competes on It's Academic

A team of outstanding students from Oakton High School competed with teams from Dominion High School of Sterling and Rockville High School of Rockville on IT'S ACADEMIC, the nation's foremost high school quiz program. The competition was spirited and Rockville High School won the match. The program will air Saturday, October 22, at 11:00 AM on NBC4, Channel 4. The Oakton team consists of Kristi Carrigan, Cameron Lindsay, and Katherine Croote. Their faculty coach is Jackie Fernandez and Marianne Scales. IT'S ACADEMIC which has been recognized by the Guinness Book of Records as "the world's longest-running television quiz program," is now celebrating its 51st year on the air. The program is sponsored by GIANT FOOD. Hillary Howard, news anchor of WTOP radio substituted for Mac McGarry as quizmaster.



America Needs You. Buckle Up!

The Seat belt laws are divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary seat belt laws allow law enforcement officers to ticket a driver for not wearing a seat belt, without any other traffic offense taking place. Secondary seat belt laws state that law enforcement officers may issue a ticket for not wearing a seat belt only when there is another citable traffic infraction. Get Behind National Teen Driver Safety Week

National Teen Driver Safety Week (NTDSW) – October 16-22, 2011 is dedicated to raising awareness and seeking solutions to unnecessary teen deaths on the road. Established by Congress in 2007 and held annually on the third week of each October, its goal is to focus the country's attention on this serious issue. Oakton High School has selected October 18 2011 as our Teen Driver Safety Day! Throughout the day

there will be many activities promoting safe driving. The Fairfax County Police will be conducting an "educational" seat belt inspection that morning, Seat Belt Convincer demonstrations and other activities during all four lunches.

Please take an "America Needs You, Buckle Up!" window cling and display it to promote teen driver safety. You may apply to the lower portion of a rear car window, but state law requires your vehicle be equipped with two side-view mirrors to do so. Contact the Oakton High School Security Office at 703-319-2716 or Officer Darrell Estess (SRO) at 703-319-2705, if you have questions or desire more information.

Passing Safety on School Grounds

State laws prohibit the passing of stopped school buses loading or unloading children. This includes loading and unloading children on school grounds. Please remind staff, students, parents, and any visitors through school publications or personally as warranted. Penalties if found guilty of passing a stopped school bus includes:

- Reckless Driving - Confinement in jail (Not more than 12 months) or Fine (not more than \$2500) or both. Class 1 Misdemeanor and 4 demerit points that remain on record for 11 years.
- Civil Penalty - Fine of \$250 and 4 demerit points remain on record for 3 years.

Help us continue to keep our children safe at all times and avoid unnecessary conflicts with other motorists.

News from Theatre Arts

www.oaktondrama.org

Welcome back! We have already had a busy opening to the school year in the drama department. Drama 3&4 have finished auditions for our fall season and we will now begin the exciting construction and rehearsal process. Mark your calendars for November 10 - 12 when we will present ALICE IN WONDERLAND followed by THE 39 STEPS on November 17, 18, 19.

Auditions for FOOTLOOSE are "kicking off" this month. We are thrilled to have our CAPPIES nominated choreographer Sarah Smith back and creating our dance moves. Don't miss this high energy show when it runs from March 29th-31st.

Our first field trip to Signature Theatre is on October 16th to see THE BOY DETECTIVE FAILS and as always we will be heading off to NYC in December to take on Manhattan for our 24 hour field trip. This year we will be seeing MEMPHIS and WARHORSE.

See you in the audience,

Vanessa Gelinas

Winter Sports Begin Monday, Nov. 7th/Registration is November 2nd

The following winter sports are set to begin tryouts on Monday, November 7: **Basketball, Girls Gymnastics, Swim/Dive, Wrestling and Indoor Track/Field.** There will be a **MANDATORY** winter sports drop-in registration for athletes only on Wednesday, November 2 in the cafeteria, 2:30-3:30. At this time, coaches will check to make sure all athletes have turned in their paper work and give out last minute instructions before tryouts.

In order to try out, each student needs a doctor's physical dated after May 1, 2011 on file with the Activities Office/Athletic Trainer. If you turned one in for a fall sport or had it done at an FCPS school since May, it will be on file. The official VHSL physical form marked "Revised March 2011" must be used. Each student also needs to give the coach a new Emergency Care Information Form. All forms can be found at www.oakton-athletics.org or on the Activities Office door. Call 703-319-2760 for more information. **PLEASE MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS AND TURN IT IN TO THE ACTIVITIES OFFICE BY October 26. MAKE SURE YOU WRITE THE SPORT ON THE EMERGENCY CARE FORM SO WE CAN GIVE IT TO THE CORRECT COACH.** You can mail both to OHS Activities Office, 2900 Sutton Road, Vienna, VA 22181.

In addition, this year before tryouts begin, every athlete and one parent of every athlete must take a short on-line test about concussions. The link to take this is <http://www.fcps.edu/supt/activities/atp/concussion-educationfirst.htm>

Once there, you will find a link for parents to take it and a link for the athlete to take. Once the parent has completed the slide show, it will issue a certificate. We suggest you print off a copy for your records however you do not need to send us that copy. Your completion will go into a database that the Athletic Trainer will have access to. After the athlete has completed the slide show, there is no certificate to print. His/her completion will also go into that database automatically. The Activities Office and the Athletic Trainer will use that database to confirm that the concussion test has successfully been completed by both the parent and the athlete.

CALENDAR

- October 10 - Columbus Day, no school
- October 11 - Athletic Boosters Golf Tournament
- October 12 - No collaboration, PSAT/ACT testing
- October 15 - Oakton Band Classic
- October 25 - National Teen Driver Day
- October 25 - Picture retake day
- October 29 - VA State Band Competition
- November 2 - PTSA Meeting
- November 2 - Winter Sports Registration
- November 10-12 - Drama Department presents *Alice in Wonderland*
- November 17-19 - Drama Department presents 39 STEPS

Oakton Band Night at the Silver Diner

Enjoy dinner out on November 14th from 6-8 pm at the Fair Lakes Silver Diner and help raise money for Oakton Bands! 20% of the profits of all meals served during this time will go towards Oakton Bands. Come see band members and band parents serve and clean up. We will have a table in the lobby for donations and some spirit wear on sale. Please contact Rita Hemmig at ritahemmig@msn.com.